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ABSTRACT

The paper describes implementation of a gifted program providing an individualized educational plan (IEP) for gifted children (kindergarten through high school) in St. Charles, Illinois. The article discusses the implementation of the program at one elementary school and lists the five goals. Also provided are the topics of the 8-day inservice training given the staff of the school, which includes such areas as a review of the instructional goals, the characteristics of giftedness, the screening devices and standards for identifying giftedness; and writing an IEP for a gifted child. (PHR)

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"AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN (IEP) FOR THE GIFTED CHILD"

By Mrs. Diana Peters
Wild Rose School Principal

"Hide not your talents; they for use were made...What's a Sun-Dial in the Shade?" - Ben Franklin, Poor Richard's Almanac

The quality of life is dependent to a great extent on the contributions of its most capable people. Progress in society is linked with the distinguished accomplishments of talented people who are given the opportunity to reach their full potintial. The impact on the standard of living by people like Jonas Salk, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington Carver, Thomas Edison, Madame Curie, and is enjoyed by all. Every human being benefits when individuals are given the opportunity to develop their special talents. The School Board, which offers quality differentiated instruction for gifted students in its educational program, provides the opportunity to develop the highest talents of its youth and meets its obligation to the gifted and to society as a whole.

The St. Charles Community Unit School Districe, 303, in St. Charles, Illinois is a K-12 unit district which takes its obligation to provide quality education for all children seriously. In the spring of 1976, the St. Charles School Board established a Curriculum Committee, after extensive research and discussion,presented to the School Board at a regular meeting its proposal for the development of a K-12 Gifted Program which follows the guidelines for the Illinois Plan for the Gifted. The Curriculum Committee outlined a philosophy of education for the gifted and a program rationale. After a second reading, the Gifted Program Proposal was adopted unanimously by the St. Charles School Board. What is exemplary about the St. Charles approach is that from the start, the school board, administrators

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teachers, and parents were working as a team to develop the plans for the gifted. This type of unified team work is important for successful program planning in any area of study, but especially in Gifted Education where misinformation, competing priorities for money, and fears of establishing an "elite" are concerns. By having a broad base of people serve on the Curriculum Committee, the school district has a nucleus of people who can accurately represent the facts about the need and benefits of Gifted Education.

Once the School Board adopted the development of a K-12 Gifted Program as board policy, the Superintendent, Doctor Donald D'Amico, and his assistants worked with their principals during the fall of 1976 to develop a plan. St. Charles School District is made up of eight elementary, two junior high, and one high school. It was decided that the Gifted Program development should begin at three elementary schools and then be expanded into the remaining schools.

Let us now look at Wild Rose Elementary School, one of the three pilot schools, to see how its Gifted Program was developed and implemented. Wild Rose School is a K-5 grade school with about 425 students. It is situated on eleven (11) acres of wooded land on the northwest side of St. Charles. Wanting to involve parents and teachers in the program planning, the Wild Rose principal worked with the Illinois Office of Education Area Service Center Consultants for the Gifted to plan an evening PTO Meeting in February of 1977. At this meeting, the parents and teachers received factual information on the Illinois Plan for the Gifted, the need for Gifted Education in the St. Charles Schools, characteristics of Gifted Children, and had an opportunity to raise questions. Although there was an

excellent turnout at the meeting, the principal prepared q written summary of the meeting which was distributed to all Wild Rose Families and teachers so that everyone had an opportunity to carefully study the information on Gifted Education. In addition, the principal prepared a detailed survey for her parents and teachers to give them an opportunity for input in establishing the program goals of the Wild Rose Gifted Program and to voice andy concerns or questions they may have. The response from the parents and teachers was very helpful and supportive. The principal used the feedback from the meeting and written surveys in writing her detailed program plans for developing Wild Rose's Gifted Program. In April, 1977, the principal submitted to central administration a written program for implementing a Gifted Program for the 1977-"78 school year. The plan proposed to use Individualized Plans (IEPs), as outlined in Public Law 94-142, to provide quality differentiated instruction for identified gifted students. The Wild Rose Program was accepted by the St. Charles School Board and subsequently funded by the Federal Government under Title VI, Section B.

The instructional goals of the Wild Rose Gifted Program are as follow:

1.) To provide gifted students with enriching learning experiences in language arts, reading, and math.

2.) To help gifted students pursue their own interests in a manner consistent with their style(s) of learning.

3.) To develop higher level thinking skills in gifted students by assisting students in identigying and solving problems.

4.) To help gifted students find public outlets for displaying student work.

5.) To provide gifted students with opportunities to help them grow socially and emotionally.

In order to offer quality differentiated instruction to the gifted students, the Wild Rose principal and staff worked with consultants in the spring of 1977 to select appropriate screening devices and establish standards for identifying gifted students. An IQ test, achievement test, affective tests (self-esteem, general anxiety, and test anxiety) were administered to all first-fifth grade students. In addition, the teachers filled out a "Teacher Checklist for Identifying Gifted Students" for every child. The screening devices for Kindergarten children varied slightly. The students were screened by June of 1977. The teachers and principal selected the students based on the students' ability to meet the established criteria. Students who enrolled at Wild Rose after June, were assessed in September of 1977.

In August, 1977, the Wild Rose faculty returned to work eight days early to participate in intensive in-service training in preparation for program implementation in September, 1977. The in-service in gifted education was tailored to the needs of the Wild Rose faculty. The sequence of topics was as follows:

1.) A review of the instructional goals of the Wild Rose Gifted Program.

2.) A review of the Characteristics of Gifted Children.

3.) A review of the screening devices and standards for identifying gifted students.

4.) A review of the students selected for the program to be sure they met the criteria.

5.) A discussion of how to group students, schedule classes, and who was to teach the gifted students.

6.) How to write Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for a Gifted Child.

7.) How to involve parents, students, and other appropriate staff in IEP multi-disciplinary conference.

8.) How to modigy curriculum and methodology to challenge gifted students.

9.) Student evaluation and program evaluation.

By August 29,1977, the teachers had prepared a fact sheet on each identified gifted student which summarized his present level of performance and recommended differentiated instruction. In addition, the teachers prepared IEP plans which stated cognitive and affective annual goals for each identified gifted student.

By September 12, 1977, the teachers had scheduled the IEP conferences with the parents and the principal. The students, psychologist, social worker, and nurse were invited to attend the conferences when deemed appropriate. The teachers will hold progress conferences with parents in October and February.

On September 12, 1977, the teachers implemented the IEP plans. Differentiated instruction is carefully planned by the teacher to help each child attain the cognitive and affective annual goals that were established.

The principal meets with the faculty to discuss student progress monthly, or more frequently if needed.

Each spring all students will be screened for a gifted placement. IEP's will be developed and IEP conferences scheduled for the identified gifted students for the following school year.

It is the intention of the Wild Rose staff to incorporate the gifted program into the child's school day in a subtle, natural way. We feel that all children, no matter what their ability, deserve an education which will challenge them to their full potential. It is our plan to extend the area of study in the gifted program beyond language arts, reading and math in future years.

The Wild Rose staff hopes that their efforts will help gifted children achieve their full potential, so that the gifted children can live happy, productive lives and enrich the society in which they live.